

I want to thank the Royal British Legion for giving me the honour of taking part in this incredibly moving event that commemorates one of the most notable days in world history.

Each and every year, service men and women, veterans, families and communities from around the world come together to 'remember'.

It was almost a year before the armistice was signed that proposals for every person from the British Empire who gave the ultimate sacrifice; irrespective of rank, status, nationality or religion would be remembered forever.

This was the state recognising the sacrifices made by individuals, families and entire communities. The vision was driven initially by Major General Fabian Ware, considered to be the founder of the war graves commission. His view was that as they had joined together; had fought together; had died together and that now they should lie together in peace forever.

To my mind, Remembrance Sunday is not just a state occasion; it is one of the most significant community events in the calendar. From the very beginning, it was the families, villages, schools, factories, towns and cities that erected and funded the hundreds of memorials we see on our travels across the country and beyond. It is those very communities, people



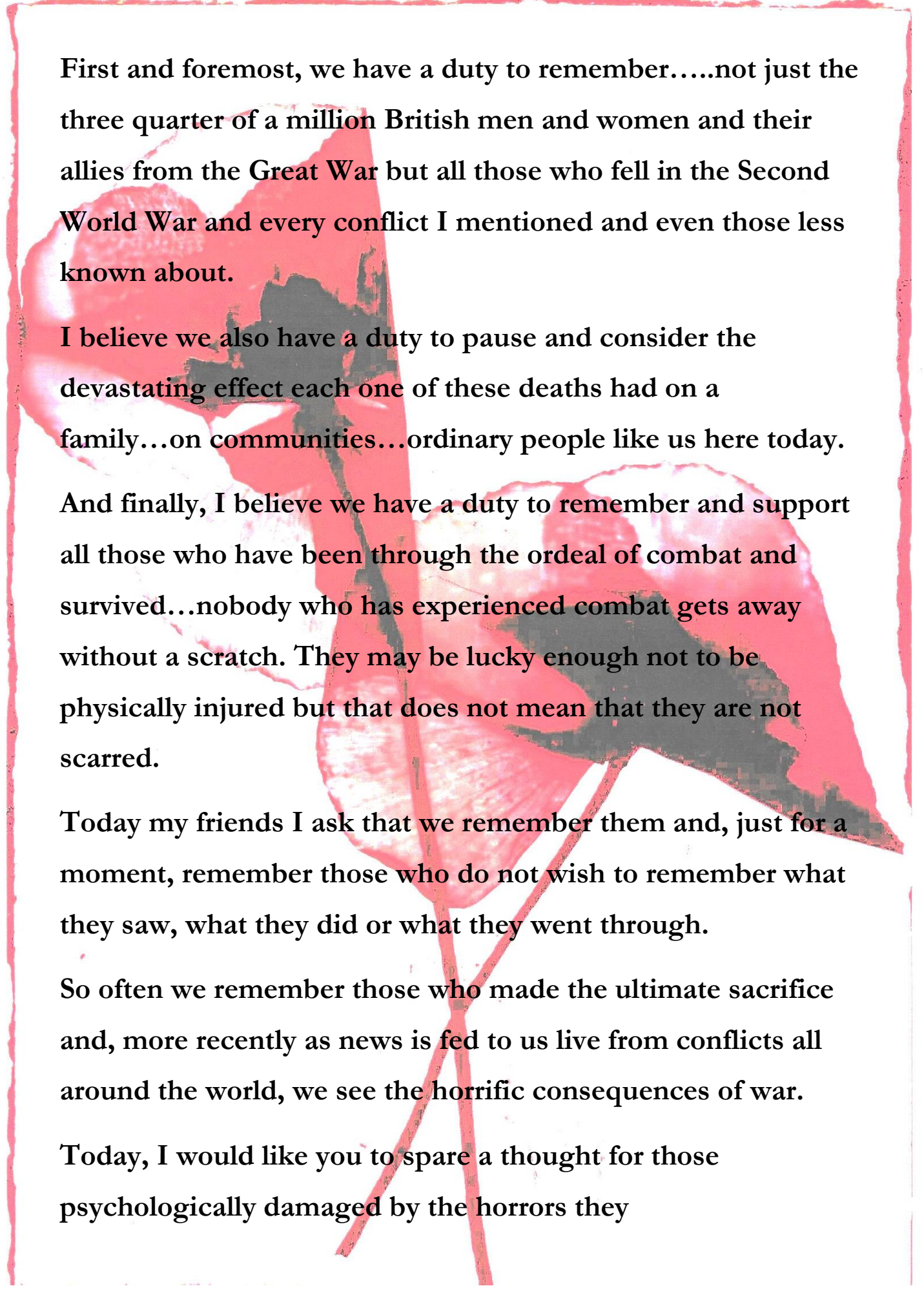
like you and i that have gathered together every year since to remember.

Our 'commitment' in the response to the exhortation is that 'we will remember them' and it is right and proper that those who gave the ultimate sacrifice or forfeit their futures should never be forgotten and, despite the significance of this day, we cannot restrict our thoughts to those who fell in the two World Wars.

As you will all be aware, since the two world wars, there has rarely been a year when servicemen and women have not been asked to put their lives on the line so that we and others can live in peace. To do their duty...Malaya, Korea, Egypt, Kenya, Oman, Cyprus\*, Suez, Borneo, Dhofar\*, Aden, Northern Ireland\* and the Falklands\*. The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw our forces in Bosnia, Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan....and, as we know we continue to support local forces in Iraq to this day. Why the catalogue you may ask....simple....until there is peace, we will always have cause to remember those who have been affected by war.

Well, I firmly believe that we, "those who were left to grow old" also have a duty.





First and foremost, we have a duty to remember.....not just the three quarter of a million British men and women and their allies from the Great War but all those who fell in the Second World War and every conflict I mentioned and even those less known about.

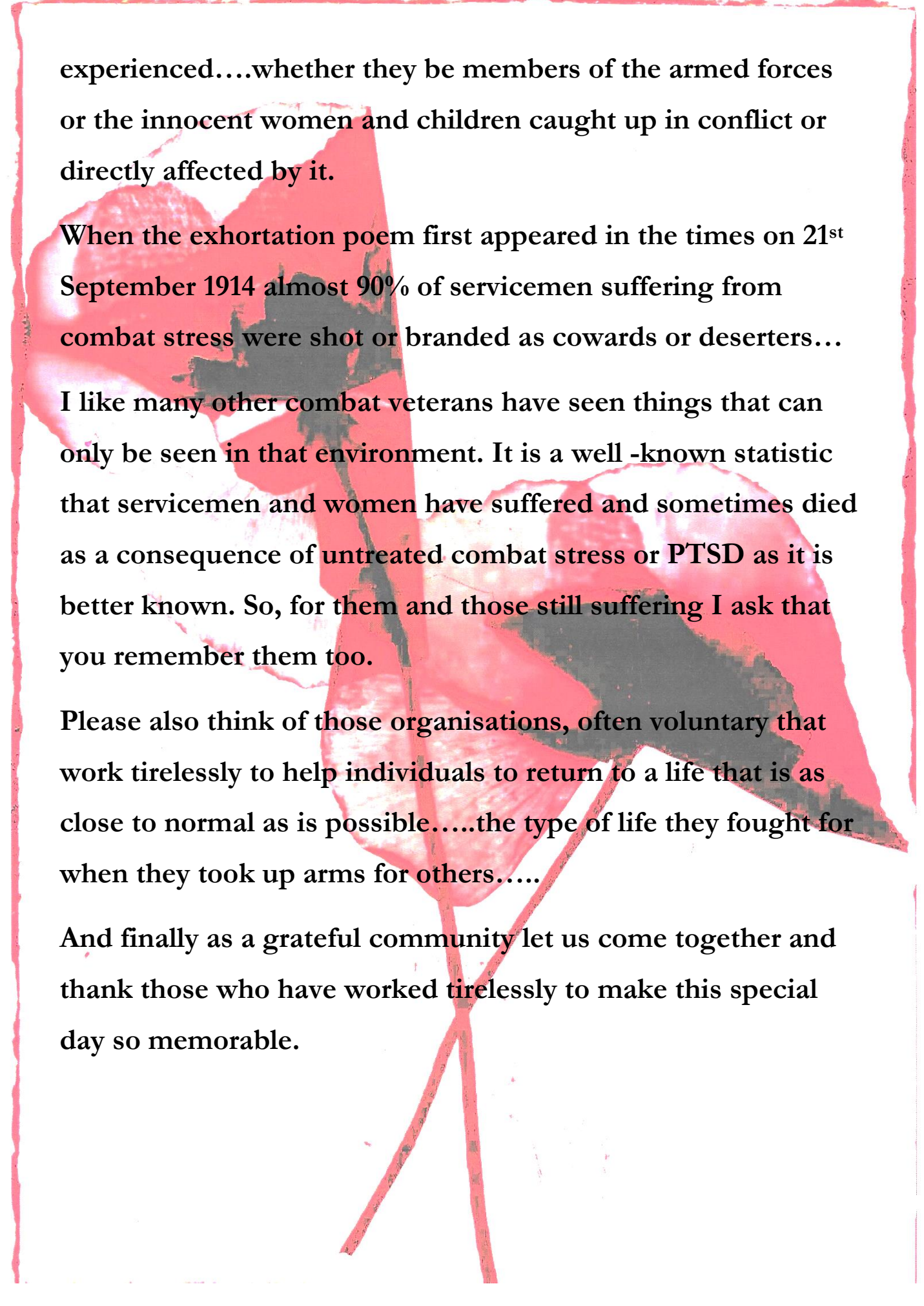
I believe we also have a duty to pause and consider the devastating effect each one of these deaths had on a family...on communities...ordinary people like us here today.

And finally, I believe we have a duty to remember and support all those who have been through the ordeal of combat and survived...nobody who has experienced combat gets away without a scratch. They may be lucky enough not to be physically injured but that does not mean that they are not scarred.

Today my friends I ask that we remember them and, just for a moment, remember those who do not wish to remember what they saw, what they did or what they went through.

So often we remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice and, more recently as news is fed to us live from conflicts all around the world, we see the horrific consequences of war.

Today, I would like you to spare a thought for those psychologically damaged by the horrors they



experienced....whether they be members of the armed forces or the innocent women and children caught up in conflict or directly affected by it.

When the exhortation poem first appeared in the times on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1914 almost 90% of servicemen suffering from combat stress were shot or branded as cowards or deserters...

I like many other combat veterans have seen things that can only be seen in that environment. It is a well -known statistic that servicemen and women have suffered and sometimes died as a consequence of untreated combat stress or PTSD as it is better known. So, for them and those still suffering I ask that you remember them too.

Please also think of those organisations, often voluntary that work tirelessly to help individuals to return to a life that is as close to normal as is possible.....the type of life they fought for when they took up arms for others.....

And finally as a grateful community let us come together and thank those who have worked tirelessly to make this special day so memorable.